

CONNECTICUT BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

Salient Factor Score
CTSFS99

Salient Factor Score – A Risk Assessment Instrument

What it is
How to use it

Statutory Guidance

Sec. 54-125a.(a) “A person...may be allowed to go at large on parole **in the discretion** of the panel of the Board of Parole...if (1) it appears...that there is **reasonable probability** the such inmate will **live and remain at liberty without violating the law**, and (2) such release is not incompatible with the welfare of society.”

Board's Mission

The Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles is committed to protecting the public by making responsible decisions regarding when and under what circumstances eligible offenders will be released from confinement. Decisions are based primarily on the likelihood that offenders will remain at liberty without violating the law. The Board sets appropriate conditions to manage risk and maximize the potential for offenders to remain crime free.

Enter Risk Assessment

An Objective Tool Based on:

- ▣ a review of available information,
- ▣ information related to recidivism,
- ▣ professionally recognized statistical methods,

THAT

- Assigns inmates to groups, based upon the probability of their violating the law

Statistical Risk Assessment and Criminal Justice

- ▣ Parole guideline systems since the 1920s
- ▣ Salient Factor Score used by the U.S. Parole Commission since 1972
- ▣ United States Sentencing Commission's Guidelines - since 1987
- ▣ DOC Classification System - since 1989
- ▣ Probation and Parole Supervision Levels

Group Assessment

- ▣ Risk Assessment in this context estimates “group probabilities” and assigns a person to a group.
- ▣ There is no assessment of a specific individual’s risk.

HISTORY

- ▣ The Salient Factor Score (SFS) was created in the 1970s by the U.S. Parole Commission as a way of estimating an inmate's likelihood of recidivating following his/her release from prison (Hoffman, 1994)
- ▣ The Connecticut Board of Parole began using its own SFS in 1998 based on research conducted on a 1991 sample of 2019 inmates released from Connecticut's prisons and followed for 3 years. The findings of this study were used as the foundation for the creation of a prediction instrument based on historical information. In 1999 a fifth factor was added, violence, resulting in the creation of the Connecticut Board of Parole Salient Factor Score (CTSFS99)

What was Measured?

- ▣ New arrest, unsupervised
- ▣ Returns from parole, SHR, halfway houses
 - new charges, new sentences, technical violations
- ▣ Arrests while on probation
- ▣ Escape, absconding
- ▣ Event date (offense or return to jail)
- ▣ Disposition date (court action)
- ▣ Release date (from prison or jail, not probation)

Every Type of Criminal Justice Event and
Date

104 Variables Researched

- ▣ Prior convictions and commitments
- ▣ Age (first offense, this offense)
- ▣ Number, severity and types of offenses
- ▣ Severity of criminal history
- ▣ Community Supervision History
- ▣ Crime-free periods
- ▣ DOC classification variables (mental health, education, substance abuse)

Outcomes

The Current risk assessment consists of the following Factors:

1. Prior Commitments of 60 Days or More (both court commitments and returns from community supervision)
2. Age at Commencement of Current Offense
3. Recent Commitment Free Period (Crime free period between the instant offense(s) and release from previous offense(s))
4. Prior Court-Imposed Terms of Imprisonment of More than One Year
5. Violence

Risk Factor 1

Commitments exceeding 60 Days

0	4 Points
1	3 Points
2	2 Points
3,4	1 Point
5+	0 Points

Risk Factor 2

Prior prison court commitments

2 or less 2 points

3 or 4 1 point

5 or more 0 points

Risk Factor 3

Age and prior commitments

37 +	5 points
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24-36	4 points
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20-23	2 points
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19 -	0 points
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5+ commitments ? Subtract 1 point

Risk Factor 4

Crime-free period

No prior record	2 points
3 years	2 points
1-3 years	1 point
Less than 1 year	0 points

Risk Score

Risk Factor	Range
1	0 - 4
2	0 - 2
3	0 - 5
4	0 - 2
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Total	0- 13 (limited to 11)

Risk Factor 5

VIOLENCE

- ▣ Apply original four factors and calculate score
- ▣ Convert raw score range of 0-13 to group score range (0-3, enter 0 points); (4-5, enter 1 point); (6-8, enter 2 points); (9 or more enter 3 points)
- ▣ If history of violence (defined by instant offense, or one prior conviction for violent offense within two years of instant offense; or two prior violent convictions - EVER), add 0 points
- ▣ If no history of violence, add 1 point

How it's Used:

- ▣ Possible scores divided into recommended proportions to serve
- ▣ Suggested range of release dates provided
- ▣ Adjusted by 85% determination
- ▣ Override for exceptional cases

Apply Guideline Range

- ▣ Guideline Ranges assigned by policy are the percentages of time to be served before release
 - If score is 4 or 3, then 50% - 60%
 - If score is 2, then 60% to 70%
 - If score is 1, then 70 to 85%
 - If score is 0, then 85% to 100%

Other Factors that influence Range of Parole Effective Dates

Mitigating Factors:

- Program Completions
- Positive Institutional Adjustment
- Community Support

Aggravating Factors

- Victim Impact/Injury
- Disciplinary Reports
- Lack of Programs

Pro and Cons in RISK ASSESSMENT

- ▣ Lean too heavily on instrument
- ▣ Statistics predict group behavior well
 - Some individuals predicted to succeed will fail
 - Some individuals predicted to fail will succeed
- ▣ Guidance for usual cases
 - Would you prefer an unknown or 70/30 chance?
- ▣ Consistency in decision-making
- ▣ Important part of a release decision-making policy

REVALIDATION STUDY

(April 2007)

- ▣ Completed by the Connecticut Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) which is a Bureau of Justice Statistics funded collaborative venture between the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division at the Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Central Connecticut State University
- ▣ *Summary: Prison and court data were collected and analyzed on 2,539 parole eligible inmates who were released from prison in 2000.*

Revalidation (continued)

- ▣ The study utilized data collected electronically from the Department of Correction and the Connecticut Judicial Branch. Data were collected for the 2,539 inmates who were released from Department of Correction facilities and supervision between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2000. The study group was limited to inmates who were released to parole or who were eligible for parole but were not granted it.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- ▣ The scoring from the Salient Factor Score allows for classification of offenders and is useful in reducing disparity in parole decision making. However, it does not provide guidance for supervision levels, treatment needs, or case programming
- ▣ *Conclusion: The CTSFS99 is a valid but limited measure of offender risk for re-arrest and/or re-incarceration (Cox, 2007).*

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?

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